

Jacksonian Democracy and States' Rights

One American's Story

Margaret Bayard Smith and her husband were central figures in the political and social life of Washington. Here Smith describes the lively scene at the presidential inauguration of **Andrew Jackson** on March 4, 1829.

PRIMARY SOURCE

When the speech was over, and the President made his parting bow, the barrier that had separated the people from him was broken down and they rushed up the steps all eager to shake hands with him. . . . Country men, farmers, gentlemen, mounted and dismounted, boys, women, and children, black and white. Carriages, wagons, and carts all pursuing him to the President's house. ”

—Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*

Jackson's election to the presidency set the stage for an era of greater public involvement in government.



Margaret Bayard Smith wrote about life in the nation's capital in the first half of the 19th century.

Sectionalism Changes Politics

KEY QUESTION What political divisions appeared during the election of 1824?

By the 1820s, politics were increasingly dominated by sectionalism, or loyalty to the interests of a particular region of the country. In the election of 1824, these sectional interests tore apart the Democratic-Republican Party (the party of Thomas Jefferson). Four men competed to replace James Monroe as president. Their supporters were divided along sectional lines:

- New Englanders liked **John Quincy Adams**, Monroe's secretary of state.
- Westerners backed Henry Clay, "the Great Compromiser," and Andrew Jackson, a former military hero from Tennessee.
- Southerners supported Jackson and William Crawford of Georgia.



History Makers

Andrew Jackson 1767–1845

The son of Scots-Irish immigrants, Jackson grew up in the Carolina backcountry. Jackson's father died shortly before his birth, and his mother and two brothers died during the Revolutionary War. After the war, Jackson moved to Tennessee, built a successful law practice, and bought and sold land. After the War of 1812 broke out, he was appointed as a general in the army. His decisive win against the British at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 brought him national recognition. He earned the nickname "Old Hickory" after soldiers claimed that he was "tough as hickory." Jackson's humble background, and his reputation as a war hero, helped make him president. Many saw his rise above hardship as an American success story.

CRITICAL THINKING

Connect Today Do you think Andrew Jackson would be a popular presidential candidate today? Record evidence to support your opinion as you read through this chapter.



**ONLINE
BIOGRAPHY**

For more on Andrew Jackson, go to the Research & Writing Center @ ClassZone.com

Adams Defeats Jackson in 1824 Jackson won the most popular votes in the election. But no candidate received a majority of electoral votes. According to the Constitution, the House of Representatives must choose the president when this happens.

Clay had come in fourth and threw his support to Adams, who then won. Because Adams later named Clay as his secretary of state, Jackson's supporters claimed that Adams gained the presidency by making a deal with Clay. Charges of a "corrupt bargain" followed Adams throughout his term.

Adams had many plans for his presidency. He wanted to build roads and canals, aid education and science, and regulate the use of natural resources. But Congress, led by Jackson supporters, defeated his proposals.

Jackson felt that the 1824 election had been stolen from him and that the will of the people had been ignored. He immediately set to work on gaining the presidency in 1828.

Over the next four years, the division in the Democratic-Republican Party between the supporters of Jackson and of Adams grew wider. Jackson claimed to represent the "common man." He said Adams represented a group of privileged, wealthy Easterners. This division eventually created two parties. The Democrats came from among the Jackson supporters, while the National Republicans grew out of the Adams camp.

SUMMARIZE Describe the political divisions that appeared before and after the 1824 election.

Jackson Redefines "Democracy"

KEY QUESTION How did American democracy change during Jackson's presidency?

Although the United States had been founded on democratic principles, only white male landowners could vote in many states. In the face of growing calls for reform, Andrew Jackson helped broaden American democracy by advocating the extension of voting rights to more of the population.

Voting Rights Expand The election of 1828 again matched Jackson against Adams. It was a bitter campaign—both sides made vicious personal attacks. Even Jackson's wife, Rachel, became a target. During the campaign,

CONNECT *Citizenship and History*

EXERCISING THE VOTE

The 1828 presidential election drew more than three times as many voters to the polls as the election of 1824. However, voting was limited to adult white males. Today, all citizens aged 18 and over are eligible to vote.

Citizens under the age of 18 can also participate in the election process. They can educate themselves about the issues, campaign for candidates they support, and practice casting their votes in mock, or pretend, elections. They can also urge eligible voters to cast their ballots, like the student shown here.

Activity

Hold a Mock Election.

- 1 Choose issues and candidates. You may focus on the national, state, or local level.
- 2 Campaign for the candidates or issues you support.
- 3 Set up a mock election in your classroom. Create a polling place, ballots, and other needed materials.
- 4 Prepare mock media reports on the election's outcome.



See Citizenship Handbook, page 303.

Jackson crusaded against control of the government by the wealthy. He promised to look out for the interests of the common people. He also promoted the concept of majority rule. The idea of widening political power to more of the people and ensuring majority rule became known as **Jacksonian democracy**.

Actually, the practice of spreading political power had begun before Jackson ran for office. In the early 1800s, many states reduced restrictions on who could vote. This increased the number of voters. Despite the extension of voting rights, however, large segments of the population were still excluded. Women, the enslaved, and free African Americans still could not vote in most places.

Jackson Wins in 1828 The expansion of voting rights helped Jackson achieve an overwhelming win in the 1828 presidential election. Jackson's triumph was hailed as a victory for the common people. Large numbers of Western farmers as well as workers in the nation's cities supported him. Their vote put an end to the idea that government should be controlled by an educated elite.

Jackson's success in the election came at a high price. Shortly after he won, his wife died of a heart attack. Jackson believed that campaign attacks on her reputation had caused her death. She was a religious person who preferred a more private life. In fact, she had said that she "would rather be a doorkeeper

Views of Democracy

Jackson's presidency marked a dramatic shift in American politics. Although Jackson's Democrats had grown out of Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party, ideas of democracy had changed.

JEFFERSONIAN DEMOCRACY	JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY
Government by an educated few	More public involvement in government
Voting restricted to property owners	Voting expanded to all white males
Limited government	Limited government with a stronger executive branch

CRITICAL THINKING

- 1. Draw Conclusions** Which president do you think exercised more power? Why?
- 2. Compare and Contrast** What ideas did Jeffersonians and Jacksonians share in common?

in the house of God than . . . live in that palace at Washington."

The tragedy of his wife's death overshadowed Jackson's inauguration. But the capital was full of joy and excitement. Thousands of people attended the ceremony.

A throng followed Jackson to the White House. At the reception, people broke china and glasses as they grabbed for the food and drinks. The rowdiness finally drove Jackson to flee the White House. As Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story observed, "The reign of King Mob seemed triumphant."

A New Political Era Begins Jackson's inauguration began a new political era. In his campaign, he had promised to reform government. He started by replacing many government officials with his supporters. This practice of giving government jobs to political backers became known as the **spoils system**. The name comes from the statement "to the victor belong the spoils [possessions] of the enemy." Jackson defended the principle of "rotation in office," noting that it broke up one group's hold on government.

 **CAUSE AND EFFECT** Explain how Jackson helped change American democracy.

Rising Sectional Differences

 **KEY QUESTION** How did economic issues increase sectional tensions?

At the time of Jackson's inauguration, the country was being pulled apart by conflicts among its three main sections. Legislators from the Northeast, the South, and the West disputed three major economic issues:

- the sale of public lands in the West
- federal spending on internal improvements, such as roads and canals
- rising tariffs

Regional Interests Westerners wanted the federal government to sell public lands at low prices. They hoped to encourage settlement and give the section more political power. Northeasterners feared that cheap Western land might attract workers who were needed in Northeastern factories.

Better transportation routes would help bring food and raw materials to the Northeast and manufactured goods to Western markets. Southerners opposed federal spending on such projects because they were financed through tariffs.

Southerners Against Tariffs Tariffs made imported goods more expensive than American-made goods, which helped protect Northeastern factories from foreign competition. But Southern planters depended on trading cotton in exchange for foreign manufactured goods. Rising tariffs hurt the South's economy.

▲ **MAIN IDEAS AND DETAILS** In what ways did economic issues increase sectional tensions?

Federal Government vs. the States

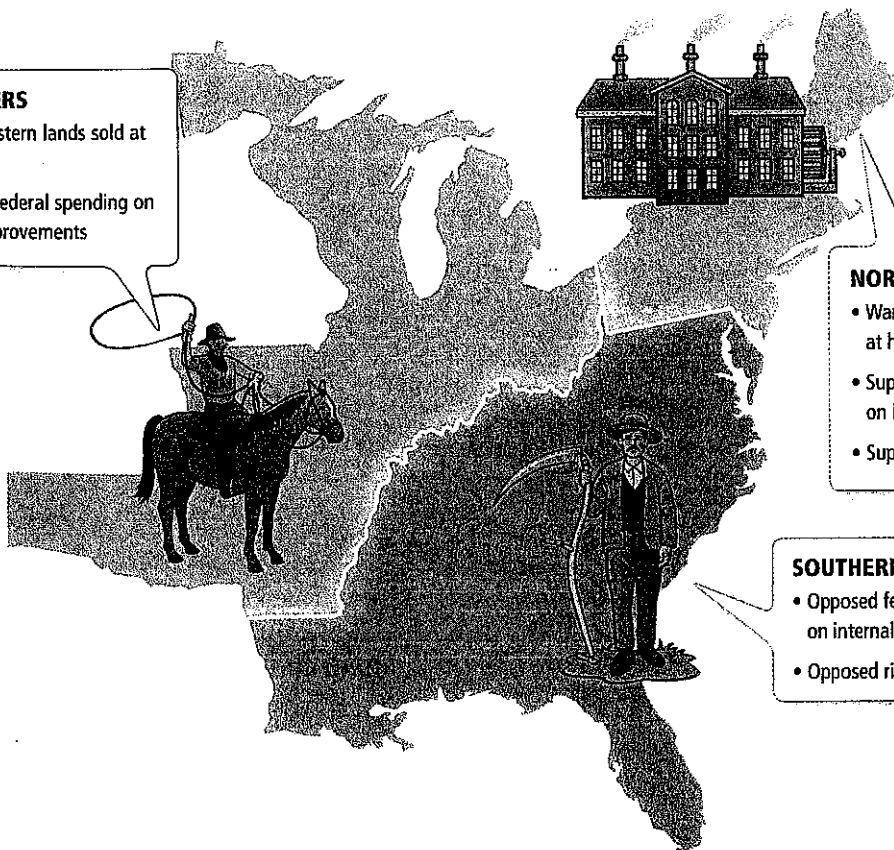
▼ **KEY QUESTION** What issues were at stake in the debate over states' rights?

The issue of tariffs fueled the fires of a national debate that had been raging ever since the nation was formed. That debate was over the balance of power between federal and state governments. Some supported a strong federal government. Others defended **states' rights**, or the rights of the states to make decisions without interference from the federal government.

COMPARING Sectional Interests

WESTERNERS

- Wanted Western lands sold at low prices
- Supported federal spending on internal improvements



NORTHEASTERNS

- Wanted Western lands sold at higher prices
- Supported federal spending on internal improvements
- Supported high tariffs

SOUTHERNERS

- Opposed federal spending on internal improvements
- Opposed rising tariffs

CRITICAL THINKING **Connect to Today** The United States has free trade agreements with many foreign countries. In what ways can free trade both help and hurt American businesses?

John C. Calhoun led the fight for states' rights.



Daniel Webster spoke powerfully in favor of a strong Union.

The Nullification Crisis In 1828 Congress passed a bill that significantly raised tariffs on raw materials and manufactured goods. Southerners hated the tariff and called it the **Tariff of Abominations** (an abomination is a hateful thing). Southerners felt that the economic interests of the Northeast were determining national policy.

The Tariff of Abominations hit South Carolina especially hard because the state's economy was in a slump. Some leaders in the state even spoke of leaving the Union over the issue. **John C. Calhoun**, Jackson's vice-president, sympathized with the South Carolinians because he was one himself. However, he wanted to find a way to keep South Carolina from leaving the Union. His solution was the **doctrine of nullification**. A state, he said, had the right to nullify, or reject, a federal law that it considered unconstitutional. He believed that Congress had no right to impose a tariff that favored one section of the country over another.

The States' Rights Debate Calhoun's ideas increased controversy over the nature of the federal union. This would remain a major political issue until the Civil War resolved it almost 30 years later.

Senators Daniel Webster of Massachusetts and Robert Y. Hayne of South Carolina debated the doctrine of nullification. Hayne argued that nullification gave the states a lawful way to protest and maintain their freedom. In words that were printed and spread across the country, Webster argued that freedom and the Union go together.

PRIMARY SOURCE

“When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union. . . . Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!”

—Daniel Webster, a speech in the U.S. Senate, January 26, 1830

Jackson States His Position Although Jackson supported states' rights, he did not believe that the states should nullify federal law. But he kept his opinion to himself, until a dinner in honor of Thomas Jefferson's birthday. Jackson had learned that Calhoun planned to use the event to win support for nullification.

After dinner, Jackson was invited to make a toast. He stood up, looked directly at Calhoun, and stated bluntly, “Our Federal Union—it must be preserved.” As Calhoun raised his glass, his hand trembled. Called on to make the next toast, Calhoun stood slowly and countered, “The Union—next to our liberty, the most dear; may we all remember that it can only

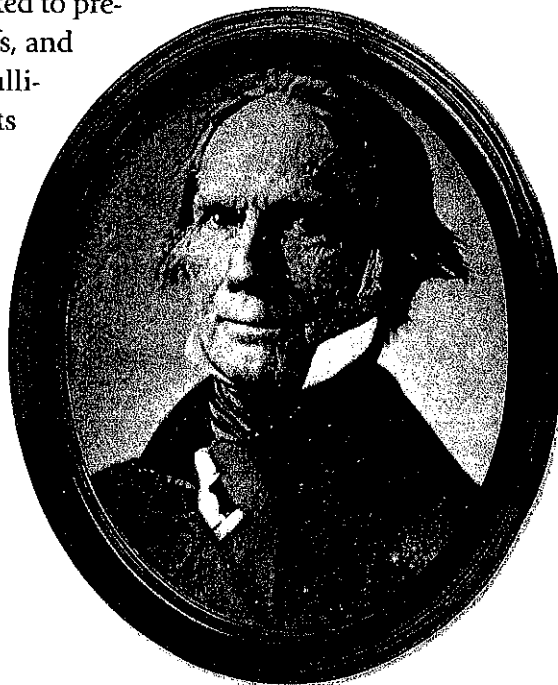
be preserved by respecting the rights of the states and distributing equally the benefits and burdens of the Union." From that day, the two men were political enemies.

South Carolina Threatens to Secede Even though Jackson worked to limit the powers of the federal government, he was dedicated to preserving the Union. He asked Congress to reduce the tariffs, and Congress did so in 1832. Unsatisfied, South Carolina nullified the tariff acts of 1828 and 1832 and voted to build its own army. South Carolina's leaders threatened to **secede**, or withdraw from the Union, if the federal government tried to collect tariffs.

Jackson ran for reelection in 1832, this time without Calhoun as his running mate. After he won, he made it clear that he would use force to see that federal laws were obeyed and the Union preserved.

In the Senate, Henry Clay came forward with a compromise tariff in 1833. Congress quickly passed the bill, and the crisis ended. South Carolina remained in the Union.

Henry Clay earned the nickname the "Great Compromiser" for his efforts to end sectional conflicts.



SUMMARIZE Identify the issues at stake in the state's rights debate.



Section Assessment



ONLINE QUIZ

For test practice, go to
Interactive Review @ ClassZone.com

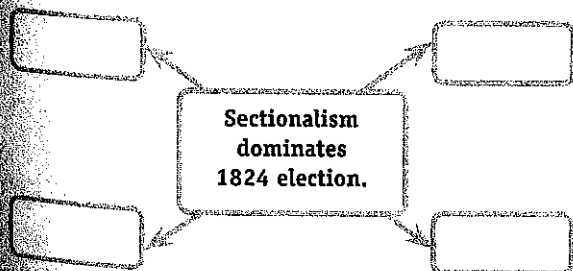
TERMS & NAMES

1. Explain the importance of

- Andrew Jackson
- Tariff of Abominations
- John Quincy Adams
- John C. Calhoun
- Jacksonian democracy
- doctrine of nullification
- spoils system

USING YOUR READING NOTES

2. **Main Ideas and Details** Complete the diagram you started at the beginning of this section. Then create a diagram for each other main idea in this section.



KEY IDEAS

3. What were the effects of the 1824 election?
4. What factors helped Jackson win the 1828 election?

CRITICAL THINKING

5. **Compare and Contrast** Why did Northeasterners and Southerners disagree over the issue of tariffs?
6. **Problems and Solutions** How was the nullification crisis resolved?
7. **WHAT IF?** What might have happened if states were allowed to nullify federal law?
8. **Connect @ Today** Is the spoils system prevalent in government today?
9. **Math** Research the popular vote totals and percentages of the 1824 and 1828 elections. Then create comparison charts or graphs to display your findings.